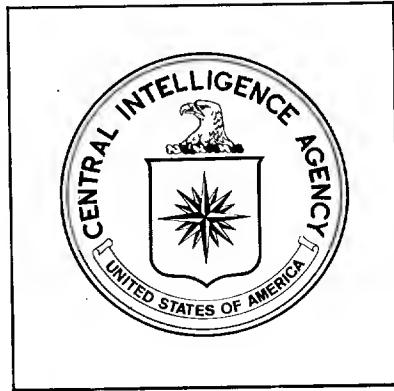


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No Foreign Dissem



STAFF NOTES:

**Middle East
Africa
South Asia**

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No. 0818/75
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No Foreign Dissem/Controlled Dissem

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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June 30, 1975

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~~SECRET~~Ethiopia*Regime Officials Touring Provinces*

1 | 2 | Figurehead chief of state Teferi Benti, Defense Minister Ayalew Mandefro, and four members of the ruling military council began a two-week tour of the provinces on June 26. The trip seems to be intended to bolster army morale and to defend the council's policies against criticism reportedly being voiced by some military units.

1 | 2 | The ostensible purpose of the tour is to gain first-hand knowledge of the country's problems. The group reportedly will meet with students involved in the rural development program and assess drought conditions in the Ogaden, as well as talk with civilian and military officials along the way.

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1 | 2 | Teferi and Ayalew were dispatched to the provinces to mollify key army units that have recently submitted demands for policy changes. The 3d Infantry Division and 4th Brigade reportedly have pressed the council to modify its land reform program and to move toward civilian rule. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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June 30, 1975

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SECRETComoro Islands*A Hitch on the Road to Independence*

The French National Assembly on June 26 approved a bill that moves the Comoro Islands further toward independence but calls into question the future territorial integrity of the archipelago. The Assembly voted to allow each of the four Indian Ocean islands to decide separately whether to accept a draft independence constitution that is to be drawn up within six months by a committee representing all Comorian political groups. Prime Minister Chirac's government had wanted all the islands to be bound by the constitution, once a majority of all the islanders approves its adoption.

Comorian national political leaders are sure to denounce the Assembly's action. An island-by-island vote will allow the Mahorais--the inhabitants of the island of Mayotte--to end their association with the rest of the Comoros and become a French department. The Mahorais voted against independence in the referendum of December 1974. Mayotte has a large French and native Christian population, and the Mahorais feel little sense of identity with the Muslim culture that predominates on the other islands.

French officials are concerned about international reaction to the Assembly's vote. They fear Paris will be subjected to charges of attempting to perpetuate a colonial arrangement with Mayotte, in order to ensure France a military presence in the Indian Ocean. France is already under increasing criticism from African and Arab countries because of its policies toward South Africa and its continuing hold on the French Territory of Afars and Issas. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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